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IV.—GOETHE'S 'ELPENOR.'

Any connection between Goethe's dramatic fragment and the Elpenor in Homer's *Odyssey* does not extend beyond the title of the German play. But the chief characters bear the familiar classical names Antiope and Lykus. The Greek story of Antiope is given in the fables of Hyginus, numbers VII and VIII; a book with which Goethe was familiar. The outline of the plot of the German play, as far as the fragment proceeds, is somewhat simpler than that presented in these ancient stories. The widowed queen Antiope, while on a journey with her infant son and attendants, has been robbed of this son by a well organized band, who slay the attendants and leave her helpless. She applies in her distress to her brother-in-law Lykus, who reports a vain search for the robbers. On visiting Lykus, after some years have elapsed, Antiope sees Elpenor, the young son of Lykus, and is strangely attracted to him, as though he were her own child. Lykus, who is described by her as ambitious and desirous of rule, is persuaded to entrust his son to Antiope during his early youth, in return for islands which she pawns to him and her promise to remain a widow and to make Elpenor her heir. At the opening of the play the time has arrived for the father to claim his son, and Lykus is hourly expected with his company. Antiope, in a parting interview with Elpenor, recites her wrongs to him, and he takes upon himself a vow—which he apparently as readily forgets—to avenge her upon those who have robbed her of her son. In the second act the servant of Lykus, Polymetis, appears in advance of his master's company. We learn from his monologues that crimes yet unavenged have been committed by him. Elpenor is the son of Antiope, stolen from his mother at Lykus' command. Polymetis further holds in concealment in the mountains a creature described as 'ein Ungeheuer, das dich (Elpenor) zerreißen kann,' and this can be no other than the son of Lykus.

Polymetis, the vicious instrument, now repents only because he feels his value to Lykus to be no longer what it was 'in den ersten, den verworrenen Zeiten.' Ignorant of his master's motives and necessities, he feels himself henceforth the despised agent of

crimes, and hopes to rise again in importance by creating dire dissensions in this royal house. His apparent purpose is now to reveal the past to Antiope, and the fragment closes with a summons to this terrible past :

‘Hervor aus euren Gräften,
Ihr alten Larven verborgner schwarzer Thaten,
Wo ihr gefangen lebt ! Die schwere Schuld erstirbt nicht !
Auf ! Umgebt mit dumpfem Nebel
Den Thron, der über Gräbern aufgebaut ist,
Dass Entsetzen, wie ein Donnerschlag,
Durch alle Busen fahre !
Freude verwandelt in Knirschen !
Und vor den ausgestreckten Armen
Scheitre die Hoffnung !’

The action of the play, as described, occupies two acts and has gone forward during the morning hours of a single day. Lykus is expected to arrive at noon. It is probable that the evening was to witness the close of the action and that the scene was to be confined to the palace of Antiope and the immediate surroundings.

Goethe composed the fragment in the years 1781 and 1783, but seemed to lose all active interest in it from 1783 to 1806, when it was printed among his collected works as ‘Elpenor, ein Trauerspiel. Fragment.’ From the fact that Goethe allowed Riemer to reduce his free rhythmical prose in the original fragment to blank verse, it has recently been supposed that the latter also added the title ‘Trauerspiel’ and wrote out the list of persons in the drama. Arguments have accordingly been advanced to prove the piece a ‘Festspiel,’ and the son of Lykus has been formally added to the list of characters. But if Riemer made out this list on the basis of the fragment alone (Seuffert, *Archiv* XIV 391), why does he introduce ‘Jünglinge’ and Lykus, who do not appear? The answer that the approach of the youths with Lykus is announced by Polymetis would not render Riemer’s failure to include the son of Lykus in the list more easily explainable by those who deem his presence on the stage necessary to the action. It seems evident that the list of characters, whether constructed by Goethe or Riemer, gives the complete number for the whole play as he conceived it. The son of Lykus is excluded from the stage, but very probably shares passively in the reported action, as suggested by Seuffert.¹

¹*Archiv* XIV 394-395 ; *Vierteljahrschr. f. Litt. Gesch.* IV 116.

The slight results which the 'Elpenor' fragment has thus far yielded to critical study seem scarcely to justify the amount of labor bestowed. The two acts which Goethe finished have been minutely analyzed and the literatures of Greece, Italy, France, China have supplied nearly or remotely related plots. These have been made to suggest, with varying degrees of probability, the ideas and situations on which the play is supposed to be founded.

This is all; for the ingenious attempts that have been made to construct the story, and to exhibit the action of the drama as a whole, convey in most cases the impression of a remote probability and are at best only convincing in details. The most remarkable feature of these theories is the fact that no two propounders of a continuation agree. Now it is Elpenor who slays his reputed father, now he lays hands on himself; or, again, the concealed reputed son of Antiope falls a victim to Elpenor's vow of vengeance or is murdered at the command of Lykus; or, finally, Lykus makes away with himself. In nearly every case the element of proportion, furnished by the scope and action of the two completed acts, the strict economy of time and the truly classical limitations in the number of characters, is ignored. Gaps of years occur between the scenes, and the stage is filled with wars and adventures and armies and plots enough to construct a trilogy. Even where this disparity is noted, the previous arguments remain unmodified. The article of G. Kettner, *Preuss. Jahrbücher*, Vol. 67, is the only one entirely free from such extravagancies, but Kettner unfortunately fails to perceive, and even expressly denies (p. 170), any close connection between the drama and Goethe's own life.

This state of things is due, in the first instance, to the supposition that Goethe would have followed out a plot similar to that of the Greek story, in some one of its forms. But such a course is foreign to Goethe's thought. The names Philemon and Baucis, for instance, were applied to the aged couple in the second part of *Faust*, with no other idea than to give added dignity to the type they represent.' 'Iphigenie' (1779) furnishes an example of a tragic

¹ Cf. 'Eckermann's Gespräche,' 6 Juni 1831: 'Mein Philemon und Baucis hat mit jenem berühmten Paare des Alterthums und der sich daran knüpfenden Sage nichts zu thun. Ich gab meinem Paare bloss jene Namen, um die Charaktere dadurch zu heben. Es sind ähnliche Personen und ähnliche Verhältnisse und da wirken denn die ähnlichen Namen durchaus günstig.'

plot in which fate is appeased and complete reconciliation is effected by purely human means. Morsch, 'Vorgeschichte von Goethes Iphigenie' (Vierteljahrschrift f. Litt. Gesch. IV 80-115), has given the history of the dramatic treatment of the subject in modern literatures, and this only serves to bring out the uniquely human element of Goethe's work in stronger relief. The 'Iphigenie in Delphi,' which drew tears from Goethe at the moment when he clearly perceived the plot, was to furnish on Greek soil a more complete reconciliation still: 'eine Wiedererkennung, dergleichen nicht viel sollen aufzuweisen sein.' Goethe writes from Bologna, 18 Oct. 1786, to Frau von Stein: 'Wenn diese Scene gelingt, so ist nicht leicht etwas Grösseres und Rührenderes auf dem Theater gesehen worden.'¹

Goethe's 'Elpenor' was similarly intended to expound a theme of reconciliation.

The more recent studies of the fragment have made no progress in this direction. The most humane of them, that of G. Kettner, demands at the very least the death of Lykus by his own hand. Zarncke gives² the course of the action as follows: Polymetis produces the reputed son of Antiope. Lykus causes him to be put out of the way and perceives too late that he has murdered his own son. The recognition of Elpenor as king of the undivided empire is then to form the close of the play. Zarncke's theory, which has profoundly influenced every subsequent study, makes out of 'Elpenor' a piece planned and written for the court at Weimar, on the occasion of the birth of the crown prince (Febry. 3, 1783) and the 'churching' of Duchess Luise on the ninth of the following month. It is known that Goethe began 'Elpenor' in 1781,³ when a prince was expected, and that he now (1783)⁴ rewrites the scenes then completed, changes the plot, and hopes to finish the whole in good time for an after-celebration of the happy event. Zarncke further cites Goethe's letter to Knebel, March 3, 1783: 'Die Herzogin ist gar wohl und glücklich, denn freilich konnte der Genuss, der ihr bisher fehlte, ihr

¹ Cf. Joh. Vahlen, 'Aristoteles und Goethe,' Sitzungsber. der Wiener Akad., Vol. 75, p. 222; Scherer, 'Goethe's Iphig. in Delphi,' Aufsätze über Goethe.

² Jubiläumsschrift zur 50-jähr. Wiederkehr des Tages, welcher einst K. A. Hase der Universität Jena zuführte, zum 15 Juli 1880. Leipzig.

³ Goethe's Tagebücher I, Weimar, 1887, p. 130.

⁴ Briefe an Frau von Stein, 19 Aug. 1781; 1, 2, 5 März 1783; Brief an Knebel, 3 März 1783 (Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Knebel, 1774-1832, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1851).

durch nichts anderes gegeben werden.' The correspondences between this and similar expressions in the letter with certain verses in the drama are held by Zarncke to confirm his theory.¹

Against this there are grave objections.

Goethe's art is symbolical.² The element of the unknown in his poetry forms a great background of symbolism, while the foreground is clear and plain. He rarely bases his art upon personifications of abstract notions (allegory) and never anticipates the results of experience in his dramatic characters. His works present no analogies to a plot which should anticipate for a new-born prince-ling his arrival at the summit of his career.

An equally serious objection to Zarncke's theory lies in the fact that Goethe's works, especially at this period, are a portrayal—in more or less symbolical fashion—of his own life-problems. He composed slight plays like 'Lila' for ducal birthdays, but works of the depth and scope of 'Elpenor'³ find in high festivals and the ebb and flow of ducal matrimonial content only their occasion, but by no means their explanation. It must be allowed—confirmatory evidence of this will be adduced later on—that the drama 'Elpenor' contains references to the Duchess Luise; but all-important as this turning point in her life had been, Goethe was more profoundly interested in a greater crisis in his own.

The letter in the Goethe-Knebel correspondence next preceding the one on which Zarncke hangs his argument reveals in Goethe a condition of mind which effectually excludes 'Elpenor' from the category in which recent critics have placed it, unless we are to suppose that Goethe, in this one instance, excluded himself and his own fates from a dramatic production of large scope in which he at that time took keen interest. The letter, dated Nov. 21, 1782, is too important to curtail:

'Alle Briefe an mich seit 1772 und viele Papiere jener Zeiten liegen bei mir in Päckchen ziemlich ordentlich gebunden; ich sendere sie ab und lasse sie heften. Welch ein Anblick! mir wirds

¹ Zarncke's pamphlet, of which only fifty copies were struck off, was not accessible, and I have been obliged to resort to abstracts of it found in other articles.

² Cf. Scherer, Aufsätze über Goethe, Berlin, 1886, p. 256.

³ Apollonius von Maltitz reports Goethe as saying in 1828: 'Ich habe eine Vorliebe für dieses Fragment; auf *diesem* Wege hätte ich fortfahren sollen, wenn ich den Deutschen ein Theater hätte schenken wollen.' W. von Biedermann, 'Goethes Gespräche,' VI 369. Cf. V. Hehn, Goethe-Jahrbuch, VI 207-209.

doch manchmal heiss dabei. Aber ich lasse nicht ab, ich will diese zehn Jahre vor mir liegen sehen, wie ein langes durchwandertes Thal vom Hügel gesehen wird. Meine jetzige Stimmung macht diese Operation erträglich und möglich. Ich seh es als einen Wink des Schicksals an. Auf alle Weise machts Epoche in mir. . . . Abends bin ich bei der Stein und habe nichts Verborgenes vor ihr. . . . Der Herzog hat seine Existenz im Hetzen und Jagen. . . . Die Herzogin ist stille, lebt das Hofleben, beide sehe ich selten. Und so fange ich an mir selber wieder zu leben und mich wieder zu erkennen. Der Wahn, die schönen Körner, die in meinem und meiner Freunde Dasein reifen, müssten auf diesen Boden gesät, und jene himmlischen Juwelen könnten in die irdischen Kronen dieser Fürsten gefasst werden, hat mich ganz verlassen und ich finde mein jugendliches Glück wiederhergestellt. Wie ich mir in meinem väterlichen Hause nicht einfallen liess, die Erscheinungen der Geister und die juristische Praxin zu verbinden, eben so getrennt lass' ich jetzt den Geheimderat und mein anderes selbst, ohne das ein Geh. R. sehr gut bestehen kann. Nur im innersten meiner Plane und Vorsätze und Unternehmungen bleib ich mir geheimnissvoll selbst getreu und knüpfe so wieder mein gesellschaftliches, politisches, moralisches und poetisches Leben in einen verborgenen Knoten zusammen. Sapi-enti sat.'

In 1781, ten years had elapsed since Goethe, in Strassburg and Frankfurt, entered upon his real career. But this period must be divided into two lustrums, the first of which represents Goethe's years of 'Sturm und Drang,' and the second the years of his novitiate¹ in his relation to Frau von Stein. The 'looking before and after,' so frequent in his intimate correspondence during the year 1781, is to be attributed to three causes: the expiration of the period referred to above, considerations as to the continuance of his stay in Weimar, and his affection for Frau von Stein. These causes really melt into one. In an important letter of Frau Rat to Goethe, June 17, 1781,² Merck, who was still to Goethe 'der Geselle, der reizt,' is reported at his old business: 'Auf alle Fälle sollten Sie (Goethe's mother) suchen ihn wieder her zu kriegen; das dortige infame Klima ist ihm gewiss nicht zuträglich; die Hauptsache hat er zu stande gebracht; der Herzog ist nun wie er sein soll; das andre Dreckwesen kann ein anderer thun, dazu

¹ Letter to Frau v. Stein, 12 March, 1781.

² Briefe von Goethes Mutter an ihren Sohn, etc., Weimar, 1889, p. 2-7.

ist Goethe zu gut u. s. w.' Frau Rat, apprehensive from her point of view, writes: 'Lieber Sohn! Ein wort für tausend! Du musst am besten wissen was dir nutzt. Da ich . . . dir gute und ruhige Tage verschaffen könnte, so kannst du leicht denken, wie sehr mich das schmerzen würde, wenn du Gesundheit und Kräfte in deinem Dienste zusetzen solltest.'

Goethe's remarkable answer¹ was written Aug. 11, 1781, the very day on which, as his 'Tagebuch' informs us, he began 'Elpenor.' After soothing her fears, he continues in the strain of a soliloquy: 'Sie erinnern sich der letzten Zeiten die ich bei Ihnen, eh ich hierherging, zubrachte; unter solchen fortwährenden Umständen würde ich gewiss zu Grunde gegangen sein. Das Unverhältniss des engen und langsam bewegten bürgerlichen Kreises zu der Weite und Geschwindigkeit meines Wesens hätte mich rasend gemacht. Bei der lebhaften Einbildung und Ahnung menschlicher Dinge wäre ich doch immer unbekannt mit der Welt und in einer ewigen Kindheit geblieben, welche meist durch Eigendünkel und alle verwandte Fehler sich und andern unerträglich wird. Wie viel glücklicher war es, mich in ein Verhältniss versetzt zu sehen, dem ich von keiner Seite gewachsen war, wo ich durch manche Fehler des Unbegriffs und der Übereilung mich und andere kennen zu lernen Gelegenheit genug hatte, wo ich, mir selbst und dem Schicksal überlassen, durch so viele Prüfungen ging die vielen hundert Menschen nicht nötig sein mögen, deren ich aber zu meiner Ausbildung äusserst bedürftig war. Und noch jetzt, wie könnte ich mir, nach meiner Art zu sein, einen glücklichern Zustand wünschen, als einen der für mich etwas Unendliches hat?'

There are no entries in Goethe's 'Tagebuch' from January to July, 1781. He resumes the wonted practice on August 1st with the following: 'Es thut mir leid, dass ich bisher versäumt habe aufzuzeichnen. Dies halbe Jahr war mir sehr merkwürdig. Von heut an will ich fortfahren.'

Not at once does Goethe gain the courage and equipoise for this new life. He writes to Karl August, from Ilmenau, 5 July: 'Die Welt ist voll Thorheit, Dumpsheit, Inkonsequenz und Ungeerechtigkeit; es gehört viel Mut dazu diesen nicht das Feld zu räumen und sich beiseite zu begeben.' On the 8th, from the same place, to Frau von Stein: 'Mein Geist wird kleinlich und hat an

¹ Briefe, Bd. 5, Weimar, 1889, pp. 178-181.

nichts Lust. Einmal gewinnen Sorgen die Oberhand, einmal der Unmut, und ein böser Genius missbraucht meiner Entfernung von euch, schildert mir die lästige Seite meines Zustandes, und rät mir mich durch die Flucht zu retten; bald aber fühl ich dass ein Blick, ein Wort von dir alle diese Nebel verscheuchen kann.' Not until the year 1783 do we find Goethe entirely pledged to his new course in the old surroundings. In September the poem 'Ilmenau,' written for the duke's birthday, draws the sum of his educational experiences with the duke since 1776, and pronounces an eloquent and noble eulogy upon the *man* Karl August.

But whatever of irresolution as to his public and social position had been apparent in Goethe since 1781, there had been none in his affections. In 1781, July 8th, he wrote to Frau von Stein: 'In sorglichen Augenblicken ängstigt mich dein Fuss (she was suffering from a sprain) und deiner Kinder Husten. *Wir sind wohl verheiratet*, das heisst: durch ein Band verbunden wovon der Zettel aus Liebe und Freude, der Eintrag aus Kreuz, Kummer und Elend besteht. Adieu, grüsse Steinen. Hilf mir glauben und hoffen.'

From the beginning of 1781 it was Frau von Stein, and what the name implies, that kept Goethe in Weimar and at his post.

The change in the tone of Goethe's letters to her from this time is well known, and indicates a change in their relations. He speaks of his novitiate as now closed. In years past, writers were not lacking who indulged in sinister glosses when commenting on this period, but this has for the most part been lived down. Present opinion on the subject is well expressed by Erich Schmidt: 'Über förmliche Anklageschriften gegen Frau von Stein braucht sich niemand zu erhitzen: sie sind klanglos zum Orkus hinabgegangen.' The matter calls for another explanation. Goethe's changed tone, happiness and serenity alternating with tender solicitude, the utter absence of a lover's impatience and petulance, marks the entrance into his most ideal period (1781-1786), the period of renunciation, of duties accepted and fulfilled, of taking in sail;² the period during which, without binding them, he con-

¹ Tagebücher und Briefe Goethes aus Italien an Frau von Stein und Herder Weimar, 1886, p. xxviii Anm.

² 'Ich werde zurückkehren und in meinem Hause, in meinem Baumgarten, *mitten unter den Meinigen* sagen: Hier oder nirgends ist Amerika!' Wilh. Meister, VII 3.

sidered himself bound to Frau von Stein and her Fritz, as one is bound to wife and son. March 12, 1781, he wrote: 'Meine Seele ist fest an die deine angewachsen, ich mag keine Worte machen, du weisst dass ich von dir unzertrennlich bin und dass weder Hohes noch Tiefes mich zu scheiden vermag. Ich wollte dass es irgend ein Gelübde oder Sakrament gäbe, dass mich dir auch sichtlich und gesetzlich zu eigen machte; wie werth sollte es mir sein!'

If Goethe's references to Frau von Stein's children in the earlier part of their correspondence might lead to the belief that he considered them avenues of approach to her, all that is now changed. Fritz von Stein, born 1773, and now of precisely the age we may suppose Elpenor to have reached when the play opens, becomes Goethe's ward, and for the time being his 'son.' Fritz accompanies him on all his journeys, to Ilmenau, Leipzig, Jena, the Harz, and is taught by him with the remarkable pedagogical skill, insight and patience which rendered Goethe unique in this field.¹ Soon (May 18, 1783) we hear that Herr von Stein is to be consulted about transferring the boy to Goethe's charge entirely. He is soon installed in the house of the latter, and henceforth, up to the Italian journey, belongs more to Goethe than to his mother. Even during this journey one of Goethe's keenest regrets was having left Fritz behind.² The boy remained six months in the poet's house alone, and was called home only because Goethe's stay in Italy threatened to be indefinitely prolonged.³ Friedrich von Stein wrote many years later in his autobiographical sketch: 'Ich war etwa 9 Jahr, als mich Goethe zu sich in sein Haus nahm, welches ich die glücklichste Periode meines Lebens nennen darf. . . . Unendlich war die Sorge und Liebe, mit der er mich behandelte und ich verdanke ihm sehr viel in dieser glücklichen Epoche von 1782-1786, wo er nach Italien reiste.' Goethe writes to Frau von Stein, May 25, 1783: 'du weisst doch wie sehr ich dich auch in ihm liebe und wie ich mich freue dies Pfand von dir zu haben.' Sept. 5, 1785:

¹ Adolf Langguth, *Goethe als Pädagog*, Halle, 1887, p. 200 f.

² *Tagebücher und Briefe Goethes aus Italien an Frau von Stein*, 1886, p. 7.

³ 'Dass Fritz nicht mehr in meinem Hause ist, betrübt mich. Ich glaubte es recht gut gemacht zu haben. Ich hatte ihn in meine Stube installiert und Seideln bei ihm zu schlafen bestellt. Es sei das letzte Mal, wills Gott, dass ich stumm ein solch Unternehmen ausführe; möge mir doch ein guter Genius immer die Lippe offen halten.' Dec. 29, 1786. *Tagebücher und Briefe*, etc., p. 245.

⁴ Langguth, p. 68.

'Ich habe eine recht elterliche Liebe zu ihm.' Oct. 1, 1781, he had written: 'Fritzens Urteil über die Menschen ist unglaublich richtig. Nur müssen wir suchen zu hindern dass ihn das Glück nicht übermütig mache.' This seems as though written fresh from the composition of 'Elpenor.'

We have already seen that the drama was begun Aug. 11, 1781. On the nineteenth, Goethe writes: 'Schon den ganzen Morgen bin ich dir nah, meine Beste, und hätte geschrieben und geschickt, wenn mich nicht die Geister an mein neues Stück geführt hätten. Die zweite Scene wird heute wohl fertig. Adieu, ich bleibe und wohne in deiner Liebe *und es ist mir schön dass deine Phantasie mich mit dem Onkel¹ zusammenschmilzt.* Adieu, ich seh dich noch heute.'

No one appears to have noticed the passage now given in italics save the editors of the correspondence, who take extraordinary pains to explain it in three several ways, all betraying a high degree of editorial desperation. Fielitz finally denies that the reference can be to characters in 'Elpenor.' Why not? In a letter which from beginning to end speaks only of 'Elpenor' and of the poet's love for Frau von Stein, this reference, couched in poetical phrase which precludes any connection with living persons or with any ordinary character in literature, must be set down at once as pertaining solely to 'Elpenor.' Any other explanation must assume at once the burden of proof. Had it occurred to any one to associate Goethe with the character of Lykus,² Elpenor's reputed father, but really his uncle, this reference would have been received as obvious and indisputable. The loose but

¹ The use of 'uncle' instead of 'Lykus' may be an instance of Goethe's endless reservations, when writing of 'Geheimnisse auf dem Lebenspfade,' even to the friend from whom he had now no secrets (letter to Knebel, Nov. 21, 1782). 'Der Poet deutet auf die Stelle hin.' But there is, more probably, a connection between this use and the later symbolism of the typical names of characters in 'die natürliche Tochter'; cf. K. J. Schröer, *Deutsche Nat. Litt.*, Vol. 90, p. 259.

² W. von Biedermann thought that Goethe intended, under the relationship of Elpenor to Antiope, to symbolize his own to Frau von Stein. This very interesting approach to the present theory was not accessible in the original essay and is known to me only through the references to it in von Biedermann's *Goethe Forschungen, Neue Folge* (1886), pp. 133, 157. The 'geheime springende Punkt' of the whole conception (the identity of Lykus and Goethe) is still lacking, but it is due to the distinguished Goethe-scholar to mention his discovery here, and to note, in passing, Seuffert's mincing reference to it (*Archiv*, XIV 392).

unbroken chain of evidence already presented has rendered a connection between Goethe and the father-uncle of Elpenor at least fairly probable, even without Goethe's own statement. With it, the theory appears to rest upon a solid foundation of fact, and future criticism, whether directed towards the explanation of the action of the play, or towards the symbolisms which Goethe has here half concealed and half revealed, should proceed from this 'eminenter Fall.'¹

The former task, though important, must be passed by for the present. The latter directs our attention at once to a remarkable series of illustrations of this same 'eminenter Fall,' scattered through Goethe's works.

The poetical epistle to Frau von Stein, 14 April 1776, is the starting point of the most remarkable chapter of sincere love-sophistry in the history of literature. Although Goethe, already in the first months of their correspondence, speaks of 'das reinste, schönste, wahrste Verhältniss, das ich ausser meiner Schwester je zu einem Weibe gehabt,' although his letters to her have been called 'die schönsten Liebesbriefe, die je aus der Feder eines Mannes geflossen sind,'² yet the important outcome of the relationship for literature lies in the fact that above the chaplet with which he is continually encircling her changeless brows there floats an aureole of gloriously shifting hues; and it is through the mild light of this symbolical halo³ that we are to view the silent yet speaking face in his works. In the epistle referred to, a mysterious future and a more mysterious, unearthly past quite outweigh the present:⁴

Warum gabst du (i. e. fate) uns die tiefen Blicke,
Unsre Zukunft ahnungsvoll zu schau'n?

Sag, was will das Schicksal uns bereiten?
Sag, wie band es uns so rein genau?

¹ Goethe characterizes the symbolical as made up of 'eminente Fälle, die in einer charakteristischen Mannigfaltigkeit als Representanten von vielen anderen bestehen, eine gewisse Totalität in sich schliessen, eine gewisse Reihe fordern, Ähnliches und Fremdes in meinem Geiste aufregen und so von aussen wie von innen auf eine gewisse Einheit und Allheit Anspruch machen.'

² Erich Schmidt, 'Charakteristiken,' 1886, p. 308.

³ Edmund Hoefler and the rest would have voted for a 'nettle-wreath' rather than a 'halo'; but it is enough to ask, which figure of speech Goethe would have deemed more appropriate?

⁴ 22 April 1776: 'Hier ein Zeichen dass ich lebe, dass ich Sie liebe, und immer Ihr Voriger, Gegenwärtiger, und Zukünftiger bin.'

Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten
 Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.
 Kanntest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen,
 Spättest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt,
 Konntest mich mit einem Blicke lesen,
 Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug' durchdringt.
 Tropfstest Mässigung dem heissen Blute,
 Richtetest den wilden, irren Lauf,
 Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte
 Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf.

 Und von allem dem schwebt ein Erinnern
 Nur noch um das ungewisse Herz,
 Fühlt die alte Wahrheit ewig gleich im Innern,
 Und der neue Zustand wird ihm Schmerz.

Aside from the splendor of these lines, most readers may have seen in the thought only the elegiac expression of a universal sentiment.

'Jeder Jüngling sehnt sich so zu lieben,
 Jedes Mädchen so geliebt zu sein.'

But with Goethe the lines do not express sentiment or allegory, but 'quick-coming fancies,' which for twelve years strive to complete, and in varied shapes to glorify an insufficient reality.

It is well known that in *Iphigenie* (1779) the relation of the heroine to Orestes is intended by Goethe to be exactly typical of his usual conception of his own relation to Frau von Stein.¹ But before this time, in 1776, two other variations of the idea occur which already suggest 'Elpenor.' Concerning the first of these, 'der Falke,'² Goethe writes, 8 Aug. 1776: 'meine Giovanna wird viel von Lili haben, du erlaubst mir aber dass ich einige Tropfen deines Wesens drein giesse, nur so viel es braucht um zu tingiren. . . . Vielleicht macht mirs einige Augenblicke wohl, meine verklungenen Leiden als Drama zu verkehren.' The story is in brief as follows: Federigo, a young nobleman, has ruined himself by presents and outlays for the beautiful but careless and thankless widow, Monna Giovanna. Her boy desires to have Federigo's falcon, now the latter's dearest possession, and falls sick from longing for it. Giovanna visits Federigo, intending to prefer her boy's request while they are at dinner. Federigo, in straits to

¹ Letters to Frau von Stein, Febry. 23, April 16, 1776. K. J. Schröer, in *Deutsche Nat. Litt.*, Bd. 90, xvii ff.

² From Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 5, 9. It was never completed by Goethe; cf. Letter, 12 August 1776.

receive his visitor worthily, sacrifices his precious bird for their meal. When all has been explained, Giovanna marries her poor, but faithful lover. Erich Schmidt¹ has pointed out that, while the pretentious dame of the earlier scenes corresponds to Lili,² the widow and mother on her farm is Frau von Stein at Kochberg, and poor Federigo in his hovel is Goethe in his 'Gartenhaus' at Weimar. We must also recognize, in the petulant child, Fritz von Stein himself (now three years old), who by his very childish naughtiness brings Giovanna and Federigo together. We shall meet Felix under precisely similar conditions in 'Wilhelm Meister,' and I am persuaded that Goethe intended Elpenor to perform the same office for Lykus and Antiope, though in more tragic fashion.

The other play from the year 1776 is 'die Geschwister,' which, as Schöll³ has proved, grew out of Goethe's relations to Frau von Stein. The characters are, as in 'Wilhelm Meister,' Wilhelm and Marianne. Charlotte, the mother of Marianne, has been met years before by Wilhelm, who conceives an ideal love for her. She, dying, entrusts her daughter to Wilhelm's care, who brings her up as his sister. Marianne, the image of her mother, is thus the means of bringing Wilhelm and Charlotte together in spirit. Wilhelm's monologue apostrophizes her thus: 'Charlotte, du konntest meine Liebe zu dir nicht herrlicher, heiliger belohnen, als dass du mir scheidend deine Tochter anvertrauest! Du gabst mir alles was ich bedurfte, knüpfst mich ans Leben! Ich liebte sie als dein Kind—und nun!—noch ist mirs Täuschung. Ich glaube dich wiederzusehen, glaube, dass mir das Schicksal verjüngt dich wieder gegeben hat, dass ich nun mit dir vereinigt bleiben und wohnen kann, wie ichs in jenem ersten Traum des Lebens nicht konnte! nicht sollte!'⁴

¹ Charakteristiken, Berlin, 1886, pp. 312-313.

² In the novelette 'Ferdinand und Ottilie' (Unterh. deutscher Ausgewanderten. 2ter Morgen), Scherer identifies Ottilie with Lili (Über die Anordnung Goethescher Schriften, III; GJb.V. 264-5). Is not 'das gute natürliche Mädchen,' with whom Ferdinand is finally mated, Goethe's Christiane?

³ A. Schöll, Über Goethes 'Geschwister,' Deutsches Museum, 1851. Schöll also thinks that the letter read by Wilhelm in the play is one of Frau von Stein's to Goethe.

⁴ Cf. 'Wilhelm Meister,' VII 7, where Lothario describes the meeting with his former flame: 'Sonderbar! die schöne Muhme, ihr Ebenbild, sass auf eben dem Schemel hinter dem Spinnrocken, wo ich meine Geliebte in eben der Gestalt so oft gefunden hatte. Ein kleines Mädchen, das seiner Mutter vollkommen glich, war uns nachgefolgt, und so stand ich in der sonderbarsten Gegenwart zwischen der Vergangenheit und Zukunft, wie in einem Orangenwalde, wo in einem kleinen Bezirk Blüten und Früchte stufenweis neben einander leben.'

But this does not exhaust the analogies to 'Elpenor' presented by 'die Geschwister.' Antiope experiences the feelings of the closest blood relationship at the first moment of beholding Elpenor in the house of Lykus. Marianne, without suspecting that Wilhelm is not her brother, feels quite unconsciously another affection for him, and is confused by it. 'Elpenor,' like the 'Geschwister,' was to form 'eine goldene Zauberbrücke, die mich in die Wonne der Himmel überführen sollte.' But this bridge is in danger of collapsing in both plays; for over Lykus and Wilhelm alike hangs the retribution for heavy crimes. Wilhelm, who has determined to marry Marianne and who is now in instant dread of her being snatched away from him, calls out: 'Du liegst schwer über mir und bist gerecht, vergeltendes Schicksal!—Warum steht du da? Und du? Just in dem Augenblicke!—Verzeiht mir! Hab' ich nicht gelitten dafür? Verzeiht! Es ist lange!—Ich habe unendlich gelitten. . . . Soll ich so gestraft werden?' It is impossible not to see among these 'Larven verborgner schwarzer Thaten,'¹ which rise before Wilhelm, the gentle, accusing face of Friederike. But this throws some light upon the *inner* nature of the misdeeds of Lykus, which might appear different to an ignorant, misjudging Polymetis, and to retributive Justice. It confirms the folly of killing off Lykus in the play and thus sapping the root of Goethe's grand reconciliations.²

The song-play 'Lila' (1777-1778), written for Duchess Luise's birthday and dedicated to her, was designed to heal the differences between Karl August and his wife by reminding both of what they really possessed in each other. The central conception, the reconciliation of husband and wife, is nearly the same as in 'Elpenor,' but both the means and the method are different. In the form in which the play finally appeared (1790), Lila is a hypochondriac, who imagines her happiness blasted and her husband concealed, a captive, in a magic garden. Her distracted ways are described by the Baron (Karl August): 'Wenn ich sie herumziehen sehe mit losem Haar—im Mondschein einen Kreis abgehen

¹ 'Elpenor,' l. 1030.

² The editors of the correspondence with Frau von Stein remark with justice that Goethe's delicate exposition of the tangled web of relationship in the 'Geschwister' comes within hair's-breadth of the immoral (I 15). But it must never be forgotten that Goethe, the honestest of self-accusers, 'verstrickt in solche Qualen halbverschuldet,' is bent with intense eagerness upon the expression of his experience in the guise of symbolic truth. He must be taken at his word, and not judged as a literalist by literalists.

—Mit halb unsicherem Tritt schleicht sie auf und ab, neigt sich bald vor den Sternen, kniet bald auf den Rasen, umfasst einen Baum, verliert sich in den Sträuchen wie ein Geist.' The fay Almaide directs Lila, when she shall have entered the magic garden, to pay these observances: 'Eile an den nächsten Brunnen, dein Gesicht und deine Hände zu waschen! Sogleich werden diese Ketten von deinen Armen fallen. Eile sodann in die Laube, die mit Rosenbüschen umschattet ist! Dort wirst du ein neues Gewand finden; bekleide dich damit, wirf deine Trauer ab und schmücke dich, wie es einer Siegerin ziemt!'

Behind these solemnities the most joyous reconciliation lies hidden, and the key is given in the words 'Liebe löst die Zauberei'; a love which not only looses the magic spell, but releases from the real ban of melancholy and mistaken vows. The fairy Almaide, in the play within the play, is the Marianne of the earlier scenes, and both have been identified with Frau von Stein.¹ But 'Elpenor' contains an almost identical scene in which Antiope is engaged in solemn observances to rid herself of 'der Rachegöttinnen fleckenhinterlassende Berührung,' after Elpenor has sworn to avenge her woes:

ANTIOPE. Und nun tret' ich vor die hohe Pforte
Zu der heil'gen Quelle,
Die aus dem geheimen Felsen sprudelnd
Meiner Mauern alten Fuss benetzt,
Und nach wenig Augenblicken kehr' ich wieder.

ELPENOR. Ich bin begierig zu sehen was sie vorhat.
In sich gekehrt bleibt sie vor'm hellen Strahl
Des Wassers stehn und scheint zu sinnern.
Sorgfältig wäscht sie nun die Hände, dann die Arme,
Besprengt die Stirn, den Busen.
Sie schaut gen Himmel,
Empfängt mit hohler Hand das frische Nass
Und giesst es feierlich zur Erde, dreimal.
Welch eine Weihung mag sie da begehnen?²

The instantly changed mood in which Antiope returns to Elpenor has nothing to do with the grim hope of some Greek Kriemhild. She has laid her burdens upon a fate that will prove kinder than she dreams and upon Elpenor, whose name is 'hope.'³

¹ K. J. Schröer, *Deutsche Nat. Litt.* 88, p. 206.

² Cf. Wilhelm's rash vow to Aurelie, and the 'wunderlichen Reden, Zeremonien und Sprüche,' which she is made to observe in binding up his wound. 'Wilhelm Meister,' IV 20; V 1.

³ This suggests both the name and office of Elpore in Goethe's 'Pandora.'

' Und ein stiller Keim friedlicher Hoffnung
 Hebt, wie durch aufgelockerte Erde, sich empor
 Und blickt bescheiden nach dem grünfärbenden Lichte' (symbol of hope).

The whole scene between Antiope and Elpenor is like the overture of a great tone-drama, and all the 'Leitmotifs' are given. There is a 'Luismotif' and a 'Charlottenmotif,' but they are subtly intermingled.

' Nicht im Elend allein ist fröhlicher Liebe
 Reiner willkommener Strahl die einzige Tröstung.
 Hüllt er in Wolken sich ein,
 Ach! dann leuchtet des Glückes,
 Der Freude flatternd Gewand
 Nicht mit erquickenden Farben.'

This passage has been applied, and with justice, to the fears and hopes of the Duchess Luise. But the words read also like a commentary on the ever-recurring tone and thought of Goethe's letters to Frau von Stein. Only in a single instance does Goethe plainly apostrophize the crown prince :

' Die stille hohe Betrachtung
 Deines künftigen Geschickes
 Schwebt, wie eine Gottheit,
 Zwischen Freud' und Schmerzen.
 Niemand tritt auf diese Welt,
 Dem nicht von beiden mancherlei bereitet wäre,
Und den Grossen mit grossem Masse ;
 Doch überwiegt das Leben alles,
 Wenn die Liebe in seiner Schale liegt.'

But in both cases it is the parents and their fate which chiefly concern the poet.

'Wilhelm Meister'—Goethe's 'geliebtesdramatisches Ebenbild'—he declared to be full of symbolisms. The most obvious and consistent one is presented by the picture of the sick prince (Antiochus), who falls in love with his young stepmother (Stratonike). In the ancient story, the physician Erisistratus pronounces this affection to be the cause of Antiochus' incurable illness, whereupon Seleukus resigns Stratonike to him. We are confronted with this picture and with references to it at every decisive turning-point in Wilhelm's career, and it is impossible not to see in it a symbolical reference to his relation to Frau von Stein. The very first mention of the picture on the part of Wilhelm places the matter beyond all doubt. 'Wie jammerte mich, wie jammert mich noch ein Jüngling, der die süßen Triebe, das schönste Erbteil das uns

die Natur gab, in sich verschliessen und das Feuer, das ihn und andere erwärmen und beleben sollte, in seinem Busen verbergen muss, so dass sein Innerstes unter ungeheuren Schmerzen verzehrt wird. Wie bedaure ich die Unglückliche, die sich einem andern widmen soll, wenn ihr Herz schon den würdigen Gegenstand eines wahren und reinen Verlangens gefunden hat.'¹

We are met by the picture again in VII 9 and in VIII 10, where Wilhelm is about to be united with Natalie. Grouped around the character last mentioned are her sister,² the Countess, and the husband of the latter, who betrays a certain resemblance to Herr von Stein.³ The original of the Countess was Gräfin Werther-Neunheiligen, the sister of the Prussian Minister Freiherr von Stein, and it was at Neunheiligen, in 1781, that Goethe made studies for his novel and wrote letters to Frau von Stein which are among the most significant of the whole series. The barriers that separate Wilhelm from the Countess are typical of the outward gulf between Goethe and Frau von Stein, and the Countess becomes therefore the double of Natalie. They are the Stratonike, who may not be, and who nevertheless finally is, united with the king's son. That Natalie represents Frau von Stein there is not the least doubt;⁴ in fact, whatever scope may be found in 'Wilhelm Meister' as a novel of culture, it represents in the plainest fashion the history of Wilhelm's education to become worthy of Natalie,⁵ everything else being kept subordinate.

¹ I 17. Düntzer, Introduction, p. ii, finds this to be the point of view of the 'Geschwister,' 'im welchen sich das ihn tief bewegende Gefühl aussprach, dass die des vollen Besitzes sich freuende Geschlechtsliebe wärmer die Seele beglücke als die Geschwisterliebe, in deren Schranken ihn Frau von Stein verwies.' It is true that the letters of the first years to Frau von Stein show Goethe to have been sufficiently human in this matter, but to suppose that he incurred the cost of high and serious dramatic invention simply to be delivered of such a thought is a strange feat of criticism. Düntzer's usually excellent judgment here deserts him. This is the sort of thing that led Goethe to 'mask the business from the common eye, for sundry weighty reasons.'

² Letter, 8 March 1781: 'Ihr [der Gräfin] ganzes Wesen ist recht gemacht mich an das zu erinnern was ich liebe [d. h. an Frau von Stein].'

³ Letter, 12 April 1782, the characteristic of his father given by Friedrich von Stein (Schöll-Fielitz, II 548), and Wilhelm Meister, VIII 3.

⁴ Cf. Scherer, *Gesch. der deutschen Literatur*, 2 Ausg. 563.

V 2: 'Was hilft es mir, gutes Eisen zu fabrizieren, wenn mein eigenes Inneres voller Schlacken ist?' A comparison of this passage with Goethe's letter of Nov. 17, 1782, to F. H. Jacobi, is very instructive as illustrating the point of view in the text.

But the all-important link between the two works, 'Wilhelm Meister' and 'Elpenor,' is Wilhelm's son. Felix has been sent to Natalie by Wilhelm's mysterious friends, without the latter's knowledge, and he is brought back thence to appear to Wilhelm at the decisive moment when his 'Lehrbrief' has been read (VII 9). In VIII 2, Mignon also is in the care of Natalie, and Wilhelm now enters her house carrying Felix in his arms. Goethe heightens the effect of these scenes by all the resources of his art. Wilhelm perceives on the wall the picture of the king's son, which had already played a very important part in a decisive moment in his career (I 17). On recognizing Natalie, Wilhelm sinks on his knee, while 'das Kind lag *zwischen ihnen* auf dem Teppich und schlief sanft.' Ulysses is united with Penelope at last, and in Goethe's symbolism it is his Felix who is brought back to Ithaka asleep. But the boy's final mission is still to be accomplished. Wilhelm's pride and false shame are in danger of making complete shipwreck of his happiness, and in VIII 10 he has determined to depart. But it is just here that Felix's childish thoughtlessness and naughtiness cause grave fears that he is poisoned.¹ Natalie

¹ Wilhelm, like his namesake in the 'Geschwister' and like Lykus, lives under a burden of conscious guilt. Mignon and the harper appear to be, in some way, sacrifices and atonements for Wilhelm. The harper's song:

'Ihr führt ins Leben uns hinein,
Ihr lasst den Armen schuldig werden,
Dann überlasst ihr ihn der Pein;
Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden,'

is really Wilhelm's own suspiration. But he himself is saved, 'yet so as by fire.' The following verse of the harper, which, as well as the one just cited was probably written in the same year as 'Elpenor' (1783), finds two striking parallels in the drama:

'Ihm färbt der Morgensonne Licht
Den reinen Horizont mit Flammen,
Und über seinem schuld'gen Haupte bricht
Das schöne Bild der ganzen Welt zusammen.'

Cf. Elpenor, 545-547:

'Ich will nicht ruhen, bis ich ihn entdeckt,
Und grimmig soll die Rache, ungezähmt,
Auf sein verschuldet Haupt rachsinnend wüthen.'

And 587-590:

'Süßer Morgenlüfte Kinderstammeln
In den Zweigen scheint ihm drohend;
Oft in schweren Wolken
Senkt sie nahe sich aufs Haupt ihm.'

and Wilhelm watch over him under the following circumstances: 'Das Kind wollte sich nicht von Natalien trennen lassen. Wilhelm sass vor ihr auf einem Schemel; er hatte die Füße des Knaben auf seinem Schosse, Kopf und Brust lagen auf dem ihrigen; so teilten sie die angenehme Last und die schmerzlichen Sorgen, und verharrten, bis der Tag anbrach, in der unbequemen und traurigen Lage. Natalie hatte Wilhelm ihre Hand gegeben; sie sprachen kein Wort, sahen auf das Kind und sahen einander an.'

Felix is Elpenor, and Fritz von Stein is seen in both. They are alike in age, characteristics and mission. The whole group of works, extending over twenty years, is like an extended commentary upon Goethe's letter of March 20, 1782, to Frau von Stein: 'O du beste! ich habe mein ganzes Leben einen idealischen Wunsch gehabt, wie ich geliebt sein möchte, und habe die Erfüllung immer im Traume des Wahns vergebens gesucht. Nun da die Welt täglich mir klarer wird, find' ichs endlich in dir auf eine Weise dass ichs nie verlieren kann.'

In 'Elpenor' the youth breaks away from Polymetis and hastens down the steep path to meet the approaching troop of Lykus. G. Kettner (p. 166) cites at this point 'Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre,' III 18, where Felix is precipitated down the high river bank. The reference is a happy one, but I cannot follow Kettner in thinking that Elpenor is rescued from his danger by the son of Lykus, who is imagined prowling near the spot. In the 'Wanderjahre,' Felix falls from the height into the river before his father's eyes, and it is Wilhelm who recalls him to life. Felix has ridden away in despair from Hersilie, who he wrongly thinks has meant to repulse his youthful advances, and he now recognizes in his rescuer his own father: 'So standen sie fest umschlungen, wie Kastor und Pollux, die sich auf dem Wechselwege vom Orkus zum Lichte begegnen.' And Felix calls out: 'Wenn ich leben soll, so sei es mit dir!' It is evident that the story is to close with Felix's union with Hersilie. There is a close analogy between the supposed great danger of the child Felix in the 'Lehrjahre,' which helps seal the happiness of Wilhelm and Natalie, and this new catastrophe, which restores him to life, to father and bride. In the one case the father does directly for the son

¹ Wilhelm Meister, VIII 7: 'Und jetzt, da in deinem Herzen alle Empfindungen zusammentreffen, die den Menschen glücklich machen sollten, u. s. w.'

what the latter had indirectly done for him.¹ Both episodes pre-

¹ Düntzer, Introd. to 'Die Wanderjahre' (Hempel), p. 12, remarks acutely that Felix, in contrast with his father, is to find while still very young an equal mate in Hersilie, and is to recognize clearly in her his destined wife, in spite of the difference in age (Hersilie is Felix's elder by some years, as Frau von Stein was older than Goethe). This point of view suggests a further comparison. Goethe, who, through all his later life, was keenly conscious that an adequate union had been denied him, has given us in 'die glücklichen Gatten' a picture in which, as Viktor Hehn ('Gedanken über Goethe,' pp. 220-221) says, 'early marriage appears as organic,' 'die Ehe als Jugendglück, das sich im Laufe der Jahre läutert und beruhigt, aber den Reichtum seines Inhalts nicht verliert.' The poem was first printed in 1804, and again in the Works in 1806 (I 63). But it was reprinted in 'Kunst und Altertum' (II 3, 24-29), in 1820, with the new title 'Fürs Leben,' and again in the 'Ausgabe letzter Hand' (1827), III 45-48. Düntzer, in his late edition of the Gedichte (I 79, Berlin und Stuttgart), criticizes such un-Düntzer-like editing, as follows: 'durch ein Versehen liess Goethe das längst in die Werke aufgenommene Lied unter andern ungedruckten Gedichten im Jahre 1820 mit der Überschrift 'Fürs Leben' . . . und obgleich er später den Irrtum bemerkt hatte, nahm er das Gedicht in dieser Fassung in den dritten Band auf, wo die sieben in 'Kunst und Altertum' hintereinander stehenden Gedichte in derselben Folge unter der Abteilung 'Lyrisches' sich finden.'

But it is well known that numbers two ('Für Ewig') and three ('Zwischen beiden Welten') refer to Frau von Stein; and there can be little doubt that the next two ('Aus einem Stammbuch von 1604' and 'Um Mitternacht') point in the same direction. Goethe's 'error' consisted in making 'die glücklichen Gatten' begin this series of five under the new title 'Fürs Leben.' This suggests a purpose. The gayest of Goethe's 'social songs' appears to be also an example of his subtlest art. While reserving an inner meaning for himself, he gives us here living forms, in which no 'taint of symbolism' has been suspected. The mention in the poem of 'our Karl and Fritz' would not count for much, standing alone. But the probable date of the poem (1802-1804) agrees with the date of Fritz's return to Weimar to meet a young lady whom his mother considered a good match for him. The question of his re-entering the duke's service was also debated (Schöll-Fielitz, II 395). This point of time, just as Goethe was again making overtures of friendship to Frau von Stein (II 396-403), recommends itself as the most probable date for the composition of our poem. Karl von Stein had been happily settled at Kochberg since 1798 (II 389). Goethe's judgment of Fritz at this period (letter of May 24, 1807) suggests the tone of 'die glücklichen Gatten.' 'Er hat mich durch sein gutes, natürliches, festes, verständiges und heiteres Wesen gar sehr erquickt und mir auf's neue gezeigt, dass *die Welt nur ist wie man sie nimmt; sie aber mit Heiterkeit, Mut und Hoffnung aufzunehmen*, auch wenn sie sich widerlich zeigt, ist ein Vorrecht der Jugend das wir ihr wohl gönnen müssen, weil wir es auch einmal *genossen haben*.' The poem is intended by Goethe for a merry marriage song for his Fritz, but it represents at the same time the culmination, in lyrical form, of the dramatic symbolisms which have formed the theme of this essay;

sent an obvious parallel to 'Elpenor.' In the anticipated scene in which Elpenor is supposed to fall from the height before Lykus' company, we may perhaps go further and imagine that Lykus rescues and receives the youth, who then greets his savior and supposed father with a similar glad resolve: 'Wenn ich leben soll, so sei es mit dir!' At this moment why may not the boy perceive on Lykus' neck the 'goldnes Kettchen' with the 'Bild der Sonne wohlgegraben,' by which he was to recognize Antiope's lost son and be led on the track of his revenge? Hitherto it has been taken for granted that this reputed son of Antiope is to appear wearing the ornament in question. But it has already been shown that he does not, in all probability, appear on the stage through the whole course of the play. The tragic complication called for—and 'Elpenor' was published as 'a tragedy' by Goethe in 1806—is introduced in an effective way if Elpenor's confidence and gratitude receive a sudden shock through his recognizing the mysterious ornament in his father's possession. The astronomical sign for the sun is Goethe's designation of Frau von Stein. One need only refer to his 'Tagebuch' to perceive at once the very great significance of this sign for him in his most private meditations and life-records. What could be more in the line of Goethe's invention than that Lykus, having appropriated the ornament for himself when the child was robbed from its mother, and having worn it since as a talisman, should now, on the festival day which seems destined to witness his reconciliation with Antiope, in her boy, appear with this badge upon his breast! Should this forecast be correct, the action of the play, thus dimly perceived, assumes simple but grand outlines. Opportunity is still afforded for thwarting the plots of Polymetis and for meting out tragic justice to him. But, above all, space is given for the inner conflicts and purification of the three main characters. Antiope is to pay her thanks at the altars which have not compelled the fulfilment

the last stone in the arch of the 'goldene Zauberbrücke' which was to bear the author of 'die Geschwister' over into 'die Wonne der Himmel.' Under the new title, 'Fürs Leben,' it forms the approach to a new mysterious structure, which embraces his whole existence in one enormous span:

'Denn was der Mensch in seinen Erdenstricken
 Von hohem Glück mit Götternamen nennt,

 Das hatt' ich all in meinen besten Stunden
 In ihr entdeckt und es für mich gefunden.'

of her life-poisoned vows of revenge. She is also to laud the gods that Elpenor is not called upon to share what he is and has with the 'Ungeheuer in den Klüften des Gebirgs,' who, though he does not appear on the stage, still hangs over the life of Lykus and of them all, like a terror.¹ Lykus, while welcoming the present, is to shudder at the past and to bow in thankfulness that the words 'denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden' do not come true in his life. And Elpenor? In so far as he personates the son and heir of Karl August and Luise, it would be folly to speculate upon his future trials and struggles, and we have no guarantee that Goethe intended—un-Goethean-like—to emphasize such problematic matters. But the Elpenor whose mission it is to unite Lykus and Antiope has had his horoscope cast elsewhere by the poet. The lines written by Goethe in Fritz von Stein's 'Stammbuch,' 17 March 1785, not only show with what hope he looked into the boy's future, but also throw some welcome light upon the problems presented in the play, in the three chief characters.

' Unglück bildet den Menschen und zwingt ihn, sich selber zu kennen ;
 Leiden giebt dem Gemüt doppeltes Streben und Kraft.
 Uns lehr' eigener Schmerz, der andern Schmerzen zu teilen,
 Eigener Fehler erhält Demut und billigen Sinn.
 Mögest du, glücklicher Knabe, nicht dieser Schule bedürfen,
 Und nur Fröhlichkeit dich führen die Wege des Rechts.'

¹ If the son of Lykus stands for the 'Larven verborgner schwarzer Thaten' in Goethe's life, that is, for the dark side of his period of 'Sturm und Drang,' dare we suppose that the poet, with his known dependence upon actual experience for his types, would have given this a distinct dramatic personality? I have thought of Lenz, whom Goethe calls 'das kleine Ungeheuer,' as the most probable impersonation of this idea. Lenz appears in Weimar in 1776, is allowed by Goethe, with some misgivings, to read Shakespeare with Frau von Stein, confesses reluctantly to himself—in an otherwise beautiful poem—that he cannot thrust himself between Goethe and his friend, withdraws to Berka ('die Klüfte des Gebirgs') and wails out his forlorn Sturm-und-Drang novel 'der Waldbruder.' This remained among Goethe's papers until printed in 1797 with the additional title: 'Ein Pendant zu Werther's Leiden, von dem verstorbenen Dichter Lenz.' Lenz makes himself impossible in Goethe's new world, writes a pasquil in which Goethe and Frau von Stein are not spared—and which cut Goethe to the quick—and is ordered off. Lenz is the incurable representative of a world of thought and life which Goethe had forsworn, but which still pursued him with the hauntings of wrong committed. Goethe may have found in Lenz, the dangerous 'child,' a sufficiently living personification of this past, and the germ of the character of Lykus' son. Seuffert (Archiv XIV 394-395; Vierteljahrschrift IV 116) suggests, with a good degree of probability, that Elpenor unwittingly slays the son of Lykus behind the scenes with the bow which Antiope has given him.

In Goethe's 'Weissagungen des Bakis,' nr. 23, published in 1800, even his followers and friends are represented as deserting him. They see in his deepest productions only 'grillenhafte Gespenster' and demand impatiently the splendor and freshness of his earlier gifts. But these persons, when they imagine they have found their conditions fulfilled in his poems, are declared by Goethe to be the very ones who are most sadly deceived and farthest away from a true conception of his meaning:¹

'Was erschrickst du?—“Hinweg, hinweg mit diesen Gespenstern!
Zeige die Blume mir doch, zeig' mir ein Menschengesicht!
Ja, nun seh' ich die Blumen; ich sehe die Menschengesichter.”
Aber ich sehe dich nun selbst als betrognes Gespenst.'

HENRY WOOD.

¹ Cf. Dr. H. Baumgart, *Goethes Weissagungen des Bakis*, etc, Halle, 1886, p. 43. An excellent essay.